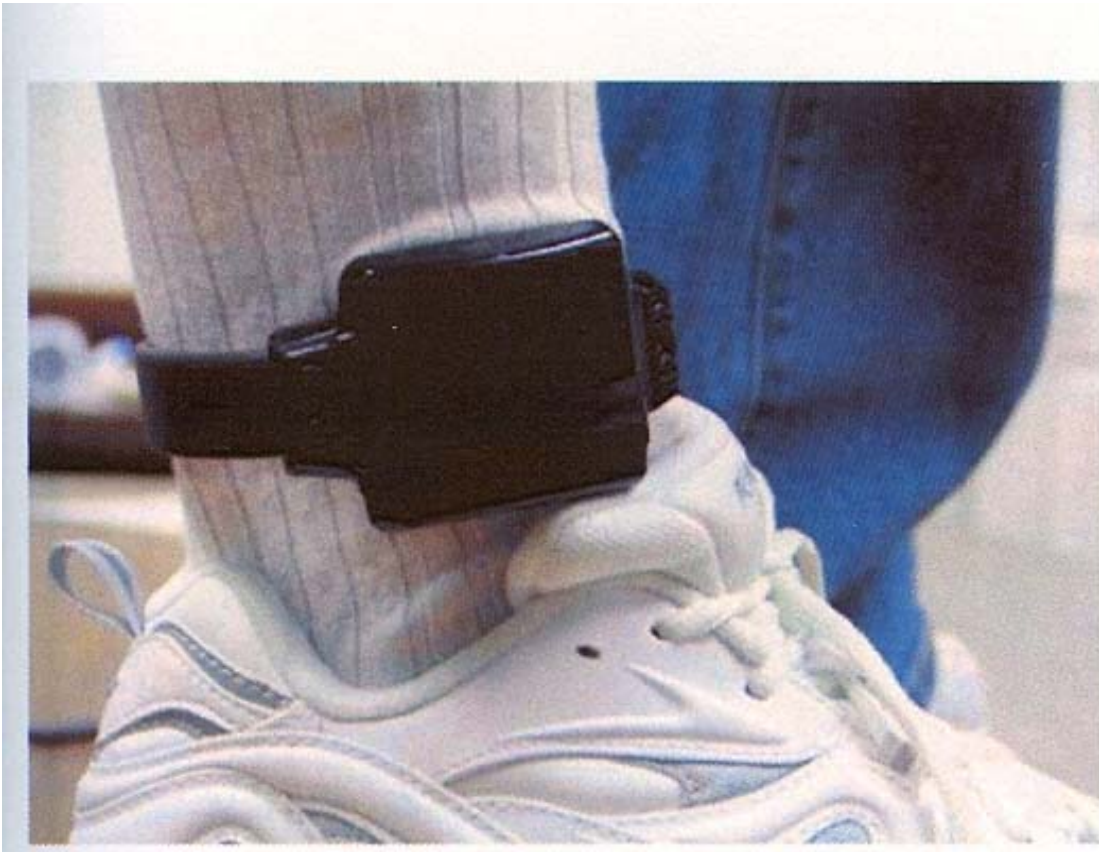


FORT MYERS POLICE DEPARTMENT

JUVENILE ARREST AND MONITORING UNIT
(J.A.M.)

“KEEPING AN EYE ON YOUNG CRIMINALS”



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Juvenile Arrest and Monitoring Unit (J.A.M.)
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SUMMARY

SCANNING - THE PROBLEM:

In Fort Myers, Florida, a dramatic increase in firearm offenses by youth (ages 10-17) has led police and probation officers to become the “eyes” for the judiciary, prosecutors, and probation. Every day up to fourteen serious, violent youthful offenders are suited with a real time electronic tracking device that monitors their every move, because at least 18% of all firearm arrests involve a juvenile. Responsible for up to 46% of all grand theft auto offenses, and 18% of all armed robberies, habitual juvenile offenders are being reigned in by police.

MEASURES TAKEN - ANALYSIS:

Juvenile firearm crimes were identified from arrest reports, Compstat meetings, plus crime and gun mapping. Criminal histories of serious, habitual offenders

were reviewed by police and probation officers of the Juvenile Arrest and Monitoring Unit (JAM) to determine which would receive a monitor. Most youth crime takes place within a six-square-mile area of the city. Special state prosecutors were assigned to handle only juvenile firearms cases, and police and probation officers received firearms training from federal and state prosecutors about how to write good reports and build a successful gun case.

RESPONSE:

Fort Myers Police received information from the Boston Police about Operation Cease Fire. Using this problem solving initiative as a guide, the JAM Unit was created. Police and probation worked with judges, state and federal prosecutors and offender's families in strengthening probation enforcement. Electronic monitoring resulted in substantially reduced recidivism rates. Accountability was incorporated as a sanction of probation including 100 hours of required community service.

RESULTS - ASSESSMENT:

Since program inception in 2005, as few as 4 out of 76 youth electronically-monitored have re-offended (5%). Initial steps were slow with only 38 monitored youth the first year. At least that many have been monitored to date (June, 2006). Monitoring youth instead of placing them in residential care costs

taxpayers much less. A Home Detention Program and 24/7 monitoring is a cost effective option given to local judges. The daily monitor cost is \$10.50 per unit + manpower, while the cost to detain a youth in a detention center is \$159 daily – and much higher in a long-term residential commitment program. The JAM Unit's Electronic Monitoring and supervision activities has contributed to a significant decrease in Part I crimes committed by juveniles during 2005.

INTRODUCTION:

Fort Myers, Florida is a mid-size city with an historical setting that was once the winter home to great inventors such as Thomas Alva Edison and Henry Ford. However, this once sleepy town with palm-lined boulevards has grown into one of the most sought after locations for vacationers, new residents and industry. With a land mass of 33.99 square miles, and ever growing, Fort Myers and the surrounding Lee County area is becoming home to at least 500 new persons weekly. And, it is significant to note that between 2000 and 2005 there has been a 25% increase in the number of new residents under the age of 18, while another 25% represent those 65 and over. This represents a surge of school age children and retirement age adults simultaneously, placing enormous pressure on agencies and organizations serving both populations.

SCANNING:

Fort Myers has had a long-standing problem with juvenile crime. Between 1998 and 2005 the Fort Myers Police Department has observed a dramatic increase in firearms offenses committed by youth (10-17). In the late 1990's, a small number of serious, habitual juvenile offenders were identified by police and probation as SHOCAP kids. This group was responsible for a disproportionate number of serious crimes such as robbery and aggravated assault. By late 2005, juvenile offenders committing gun crimes have been fitted with real-time electronic tracking devices that monitor their every move. Responsible for up to 46% of all grand theft auto arrests, and 18% of armed robbery arrests, youthful offenders are being reigned in by police.

ANALYSIS:

In 1998, a U.S. Department of Justice Weed and Seed Gun Abatement grant was awarded to the City. It became the springboard for identifying juvenile firearm offenders. All arrest reports were reviewed and analyzed by detectives, and ATF provided ballistics and tracing information to determine origin and ownership of firearms. Offense reports gave important details not collected to date, about age of offender; types of crimes committed, and location. Based on parameters set

through the Weed and Seed Initiative, data was collected for a specifically designated geographical area measuring approximately 6 square miles. (zip codes 33916, 33901, and 33905). From October 1, 1998 through December 8, 1999 there were 57 reported gun arrests in this area.

- Eighteen percent involved juveniles.
- Most frequent offense – juveniles carrying a concealed firearm (47%);
- Second most significant offense - robbery (18%)
- and third, aggravated assault (12%).

Results led police to take notice of a small number of youth designated federally as SHOCAP kids (Serious, Habitual Juvenile offenders). Through criminal history checks, and the ongoing review of arrest and offense reports it was determined that law enforcement and probation could not resolve this problem alone.

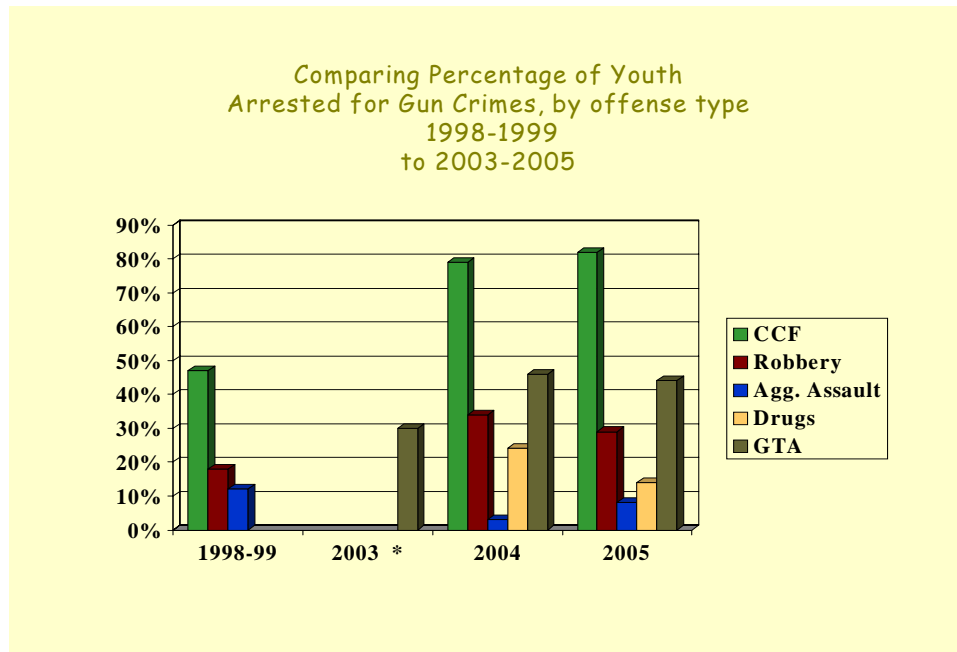
In response to the overwhelming juvenile crime problem facing the State of Florida, legal codes were ratified in the late 1990's that allowed for development of partnerships between law enforcement, prosecutors, and probation. Florida State Statute Chapter 985 gave law enforcement the ability to take youth, in violation of their probation, into custody. Until this time, only probation officers could enforce a pick-up order for violated youth. This gave birth to the Fort Myers Police Department's Juvenile Arrest and Monitoring Unit (JAM). Five veteran officers became the JAM Unit. They worked closely with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (the Department) in providing intense monitoring of serious, violent youthful offenders on "Home Detention". Grant funding from

the Department enabled officers to complete monitoring activities with overtime wages, until funding dried up in 2000. Together, police and probation officers provided intense 24/7 community supervision.

Youth made it into the program through court-ordered sanctions or were selected by the Department, based on a point system. An unexpected outcome was the simultaneous identification of youthful offenders by police and probation officers. They realized that they were both monitoring the same youth – one from a law enforcement perspective and one from probationary. These youth were responsible for committing the majority of crimes in the community. The partnership was a perfect fit. Officers make face-to-face contact with youth at least twice a day. Seeing a police officer looking over you at 7:00 a.m. may not be your idea of the best way to start your day. But, if you are a kid being monitored, you better be ready for school, and at the bus stop on time, or the officer will be happy to take you to school. More likely than not, this will only happen once.

During subsequent years, JAM officers continued to monitor and track offenders. Yet, it wasn't until 2003-2004, when research efforts through Project Safe Neighborhoods clarified the nexus between the juvenile gun problem and violent crimes. Fort Myers Police Crime Analysts compared youth gun crimes, by offense type, between 1998-99 and 2003-2005. During 2000-2003 juvenile gun

crime data was not specifically tracked. Results show a 35% increase in the number of youth that carry or possess a firearm, during this seven- year period. Armed robberies rose 11%, and up to 46% of all grand theft auto arrests involved individuals under 18.



*No data is available for 2003, except grand theft auto offenses

In 2005, Fort Myers Police Chief, Hilton C. Daniels was proud to report a 19% decrease in major crimes. And, the drop follows a significant downward trend. When Chief Daniels released his 2005 crime statistics he stated "I credit the low crime rate to the outstanding work of the men and women of the Fort Myers Police Department and to our partnerships with the community". Crime also decreased thanks to the Compstat program and the proactive approach this agency takes towards crime. Compstat is the problem solving approach used to analyze where and when crime is occurring, and was one of the methods

responsible for identifying the dramatic increase in juvenile auto thefts and robberies. The analysis is done on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Police use all available resources to respond to noticeable crime trends to solve crime and prevent future crime. Over the past five years, the crime rate is down a dramatic 47%, while the population increased by almost 33%.

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, in 2004, the City of Fort Myers had the greatest decrease in crime rate among cities of similar size, and the 4th highest drop in the state for cities with more than 30,000 people. Yet, the percentage of violent crimes committed with a firearm remained high – ranging from 35 to 41% of all offenses. Key findings include:

- 1.) Most gun crimes occur in three zip code areas federally designated as “Weed and Seed neighborhoods”. From January, 2004- December, 2005, there were a total of 317 firearms arrests citywide. Of those arrests, 96% or 304 were from these three zip code areas.
- 2.) Young offenders prefer handguns in the commission of their crimes. One-hundred-three (103) juveniles were arrested with a gun over a 3-year period. Fifty-eight percent (58%) had a handgun.
- 3.) When comparing gun offenses, over time, the greatest percentage increase is for youth carrying or possessing a firearm (35% increase).

4.) Through intensive monitoring by police and probation officers, a nexus has been identified between youth gun crimes of robbery and grand theft auto. Up to 46% of all auto theft arrests involve youth.

RESPONSE:

Early responses to youth crime include the passage of a Youth Protection Ordinance. This proactive approach was developed in 2000 in response to crimes occurring in a downtown entertainment district. The purpose of this ordinance is to protect juveniles from victimization and exposure to criminal activity, by establishing a curfew for youth under the age of eighteen. The intentions of this ordinance are to reinforce and promote the role of the parent in raising and guiding children, while promoting healthy and safe environments for children. These were the first steps taken toward removing underage youth from an adult entertainment environment, as well as the reduction of opportunity for youth to commit crimes or become victims of crime in the late night hours.

For five years, 2001-2005, data was collected for the Part I UCR violent crimes, aggravated assault, robbery and sexual battery, to see what impact the Youth Protection Ordinance had on youth crime and victimization. Results showed a 24% decrease in the number of youth victimized. Yet, there was a 13% increase in the number of youth that were victims of a crime that involved a gun.

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded Fort Myers grant funding through Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). This gun violence prevention project, that is a priority for President Bush, focuses on community problem solving while creating or continuing law enforcement partnerships. Project activities include a local prosecutor that only handles juvenile cases; federal prosecutors that address adult issues related to firearms offense (such as trafficking in guns); a juvenile probation officer assigned to the police department to track only youth in the Weed and Seed area, the location identified with the greatest number of firearms offenses; and the JAM Unit working with all of these agencies in reducing serious juvenile crimes through:

- intense monitoring of youth electronically;
- providing follow up referrals for education and vocational training
- and, assisting offenders in completing 100 hours of community service that they received when they were arrested with a gun.

With the advent of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) electronic monitoring of serious offenders provided the initial link between armed robberies and auto thefts. The system combines GPS tracking technology with crime mapping and data integration technology to electronically place an offender at or near a reported crime event. Offender movement tracking sensors is electronically compared with reported crime incident data to determine if an offender was at or near a crime scene during the time period when the crime was committed. Crime incident data is extracted from law enforcement record management systems where "hits" are sent via e-mail to both the supervising officer and the

police officer tracking juvenile offenders. In this case, the JAM Unit receives information about where and when “hits” take place. Geographic “hot zones” are areas of concern that are off limits to offenders – such as high crime or drug trafficking areas or special locations of interest like pawn shops, victim residence, and suspect addresses.

The goals of the JAM Unit are to 1.) reduce recidivism of serious, youthful offenders by ensuring that tracked offenders are detected at or near crime events. 2.) focus on known offenders with violent or serious crime histories, especially gun crimes, and, 3.) apprehend offenders on their first re-offense. Although 15 or so youth are electronically monitored daily, there are 50 more also monitored by JAM officers. All youth arrested with a gun, for any offense, are automatically placed on electronic monitors. Other youth, on probation for other crimes, are monitored daily by police and probation, pursuant to court sanctions. What made the electronic system significant was the link between robberies and auto thefts. Once youth received monitoring anklets, and they knew our “eyes” were on them, the rate of auto thefts declined 30%.

ASSESSMENT:

Since identified goals were the same, to get serious juvenile offenders off the street, a true law enforcement/prosecutor/probation partnership could be

created. Through the PSN initiative a community problem solving approach was continued. Scanning had been completed over a several year period, then the Analysis Phase involved identifying agency roles and responsibilities, as well as available resources and gaps in service. Data collection and information sharing took place at this point.

A simple solution, but very innovative and cost effective, was the placement of a juvenile probation officer in the police department's JAM office. Phase III of this project was mobilization of community members, through a problem solving approach, to address community risk factors associated with gun violence – especially kids with guns.

Committed to making Fort Myer's streets safer, Fort Myers Police Chief Hilton C. Daniels made the JAM Unit and Project Safe Neighborhoods a priority. Through agency-wide, monthly, Compstat meetings, utilization of gun and crime mapping software, and, the development of a strong resource base, led to better access of the criminal justice system, and a better working relationship. Hours instead of days became the norm for processing and executing arrest warrants in exigent circumstances. By early 2006, more than 60 youth are being monitored by the JAM Unit daily. Approximately 25% are monitored electronically for firearms arrests.

Real time monitoring has put a damper on juvenile gun crimes. Having to haul around a 10 pound monitor, with a strap attached to your leg isn't much fun. People ask a lot of questions, and you can't hang out with your friends at the mall or other places designated as "off limits".

For example, in June, 2005 Mr. X stole a vehicle from Fort Myers and was involved in a traffic accident in a neighboring county. Mr. X was arrested on the same date of the offense. The recorded GPS information supports the offense, and Mr. X was direct filed as an adult. Or, the case where Mr. Z was arrested due to a "hit" on the monitoring system. The crime – a past occurred burglary. Mr. Z was arrested and confessed to the offense, and during the confession gave up Mr. Y who committed the burglary with him. Mr. Z pled guilty.

The JAM Unit was created to reduce juvenile crime rates among serious, violent offenders, while protecting juveniles from victimization and exposure to criminal activity. From the inception of the Youth Protection Ordinance in 2001 youth victimization has decreased 24%. In the two years since the Project Safe Neighborhoods strategy has been in progress, a 30% decrease in auto thefts by juveniles has been realized. And, we believe that much of the city's 47% decrease in overall crime was directly related to the monitoring of juveniles by the JAM Unit. An historical overview of serious juvenile gun crime led Fort Myers

police to take a department-wide stance in reducing recidivism rates. A series of problem solving methods, including data collection, Compstat meetings, and a literature review resulted in the inclusion of a local ordinance, (Youth Protection Ordinance); availability of grant funds (Weed & Seed, Project Safe Neighborhoods); and specialized training and technical assistance for experienced veteran police officers, command staff and personnel, in reducing gun violence in our community.

The success of this project is due to collaborative and mutual hard work by the Fort Myers Police Department, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and State Attorney's Office for the Twentieth Judicial Circuit. Their efforts have been sustained past funding deadlines. And, with recidivism rates as low as 5% of all electronically monitored youth, our partnership remains on course.

For more information about the Fort Myers Police Department's JAM Unit, and the electronic monitoring system currently in use, please contact:

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